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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 160944

E.O. 12356: DECL: 07/03/05

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TAGS: MARR, MASS, PREL, UNSC, RW, ET

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SUBJECT: RETAINING THE ETHIOPIAN BATTALION IN UNAMIR

REF: ADDIS ABABA 5211

1. (C) PER REFTTEL, UNAMIR'S HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ETHIOPIAN BATTALION IS PREPARING TO DEPART RWANDA JULY 17-19. WHATEVER THE REASONING BEHIND THIS DECISION, UNAMIR CAN ILL-AFFORD TO LOSE THE WIDELY-ACKNOWLEDGED BEST OF ITS NATIONAL TROOP CONTINGENTS.
2. (LOU) USUN IS REQUESTED TO APPROACH THE UN'S DEPARTMENT OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS (DPKO) AT THE WORKING LEVEL TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:
 - O WE HAVE HEARD THAT PLANS ARE IN TRAIN FOR REPATRIATION OF UNAMIR'S ETHIOPIAN BATTALION.
 - O THIS IS UNFORTUNATE: THE ETHIOPIANS ARE WIDELY REGARDED AS THE MOST EFFECTIVE OF UNAMIR'S TROOPS, AND THEY HAVE SUCCESSFULLY KEPT THE PEACE IN THEIR SECTOR.
 - O RECOGNIZING THAT THE UN IS BOUND BY LOGISTICAL CONSTRAINTS, AS WELL AS UNAMIR'S NEW MANDATE, WE NEVERTHELESS URGE DPKO TO REVISIT THIS DECISION.
 - O WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO COME TO SOME ACCOMMODATION WITH THE ETHIOPIANS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THEIR PRESENCE IN THE CRITICAL SOUTHWEST SECTOR.

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O WHILE OBVIOUSLY THE TIME IS PAST FOR ADDRESSING MAJOR CHANGES IN THE MANDATE, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO RECONSIDER THE ETHIOPIANS' PREFERENCE THAT THEIR CONTINGENT REMAIN DEPLOYED AT BATTALION-STRENGTH AND AS ONE UNIT.

O IN THIS CASE, POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS (I.E., REDUCING ALL OF UNAMIR'S NATIONAL CONTINGENTS PROPORTIONATELY, IF THAT IS THE PLAN) SHOULD TAKE A BACKSEAT TO MILITARY OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES.

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3. (LOU) USUN MAY INFORM THE ETHIOPIAN PERMREP OF THIS INFORMAL APPROACH TO DPKO, REMINDING HIM, HOWEVER, THAT SUCH DECISIONS ARE ULTIMATELY THE UN'S.

4. (C) OTHER ISSUES RAISED IN REFTTEL WILL BE ADDRESSED SEPARATELY.

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